

An Essay  
On  
Pre-Hahnemannian Homoeopathy  
Respectfully submitted to the  
Faculty  
of the  
Homoeopathic Medical College  
of  
Pennsylvania

On the first day of February  
One Thousand eight hundred  
and fifty seven.

By  
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## Pre-Hahnemannian Homoeopathy.

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It was no wild fiction of the poet Campbell's imagination when he said, "Coming events cast their shadows before", for on consulting the records of the human family we find that all great events, all mighty occurrences in the history of our race, have been preceded by some more or less distinct foreshadowings.

The discovery of our own bright continent was heralded by various signs and tokens, which, though perhaps appearing small and insignificant to the men of that day, yet seen in the light of our later era, appears



as the first link in the chain of occurrences which unrolling with the lapse of ages has now added to the list of the Powers of the World one Great Republic, which equals in population and far exceeds in internal resources even the mightiest of the ancient monarchies.

The philosophic Seneca entertained the opinion that a vast body of land existed far beyond the Pillars of Hercules which were then believed to mark the boundaries of the world, and it is also thought that Columbus first conceived the idea of his great discovery from the traditions of the Iceland mariners when on a

visit to their shores. I might enlarge upon this and similar illustrations of the sayings of the wise man of old that "There is nothing new under the Sun" but I prefer proceeding at once to my subject, and standing in the full noon-tide of our glorious Therapeutic Law, look back through the dim aisles of a thousand years and note its foot-prints in the sands of Time from the earliest mention of the law of similia similibus by the Father of medicine down to these days of modern allopathy.

It seems to be a common belief that Homoeopathy is of very



recent origin, and this opinion appears to be more in vogue in the country and among the labouring class of our community than it is in our City and larger Towns for in the former place the people generally do not read such subjects for themselves, but depend on their Regular Physician for their knowledge of medicine.

But it is our object to show that the principle of similia has always been acknowledged by the medical profession since the days of Hippocrates, for in consulting the records of the medical art which now extends back over a period of nearly three thousand years

we not only find vague presentments of this great therapeutic law scattered throughout the writings of the best medical authorities; but we find hints of it prominently set forth, both in the popular and domestic practice of almost every age and country. In the writings of Hippocrates we find many valuable foreshadowings of the law of Homoeopathy and also admissions and vindications of that law as a law of nature, for in his treatise "On the Places in Man" he acknowledges that though the general rule of treatment is contraria contrariis, the opposite rule of similia similibus also holds good, and to prove his



assertion he states that the same things which will cause strangury, cough, vomiting, and diarrhoea, will cure these diseases. Again he says, "warm water when drunk generally excites vomiting and it will also stop it by removing the cause." In the treatment which he recommends for mania we find he goes further in his vindication of the law of homoeopathy; for he recommends the use of mandrake but in smaller doses than is required to produce the disease. In speaking of cold he remarks that "cold causes rigors, convulsions, tetanus, and stiffness; and cold water will cure these conditions in disease." Thus we find from the testimony of Hippocrates that

the Homoeopathic law by which medicines cure diseases was recognized at the very earliest period in the history of medicine. Passing over a period of several hundred years, we come to Galen who is claimed as the head of the allopathic school of medicine, and the world renowned champion of the motto contraria contrariis curantur, and in examining his works we find he says "I have found similars to influence similars." "God or nature has joined similars to similars." Again he is more plain ~~and is more plain~~ and uses language which cannot be mistaken, for in the following quotation he says. "The quality of a medicine must bear similarity to



the disease and its products though it must not be identical," therefore before the allopaths of the present day go further in their great hue and cry against modern Homoeopathy they should stop and examine the evidence of their Father in medicine, for from his testimony we have direct acknowledgments of the law of Homoeopathy as a law of nature.

The next author of importance to whom we look for additional evidence to sustain our position is Basil Valentine a monk of the order of St. Benedict who wrote in the fifteenth century.

He says, "Likes must be cured by means of their likes, and not by their contraries, as heat by heat and cold by cold, And

although sometimes a chill may be removed and suppressed still I say as a philosopher and one experienced in nature's ways that similars must be met by similars, thereby they will be removed radically and thoroughly. He who does not attend to this is no true physician and cannot boast of his knowledge of medicine; for knowledge and experience, together with a fundamental observation of nature constitutes the perfect physician? From the above it will be seen that as the science of medicine advanced its teachers also advanced in their vindications of the principles of Homoeopathy. Passing on again to the sixteenth



century we come to Paracelsus, who,  
 like Hahnemann not only became  
 dissatisfied with the theories and  
 practices of his day, but endeavored  
 to build up a new system of med-  
 icine quite distinct in principle from  
 the old practice then in vogue; and  
 strange as it may appear he laid  
 hold of the principle similia  
 and made it the corner stone  
 of his foundation. In this respect  
 as well as many others his reformation  
 very much resembled that of Hahnemann's.  
 And though the school of which he  
 was the founder soon perished, we are  
 not to suppose that his therapeutic  
 doctrines was false, for they scarcely  
 differed from those laid down

many years afterwards by Hahnemann,  
 but the great secret of his failure  
 was <sup>that</sup> he did not seek the true patho-  
 genesis of his remedies by proving  
 them on the healthy. Again we  
 can trace resemblance between his  
 writings and those of Hahnemann's  
 in the mode in which he attacked  
 and ridiculed the physicians and  
 their various absurd methods  
 of practice which were prevalent  
 in his time; and also in his  
 attacks on the apothecaries of the  
 latter society he remarked, "Go  
 shamefully do they make up  
 their medicines that it is only  
 by a special interposition of Pro-  
 vidence that they do not do more



harm; and at the same time so extravagantly do they charge for them, and so much do they cry up their trash, that I do not believe that any persons can be met with who are greater adepts in lying.

The above quotation might with propriety be applied to our allopathic brethren and the apothecaries of the present day, for we cannot look upon them as much in advance of the age of Paracelsus, when we consider that their therapeutic law is the same now as it was then, and they still continue the absurd method of compounding their medicines; well might we repeat his exclamation of "God help the

poor patients that fall under  
 their hand? He also ridiculed  
 the idea of compounding several  
 medicines in one prescription, and  
 the habit of learning disease and  
 their treatment from books alone,  
 but remarks that "the physician  
 should be educated in the school  
 of nature and not that  
 of speculation." He too recognized  
 the primary and secondary effects of  
 drugs, and in this his teachings resemble  
 that of Hahnemann's. Again he  
 says "Likes must be driven out by  
 their likes." Thus we see that he  
 advanced step by step in nature's  
 path, and in speaking of the dose  
 to be used he goes still further in



the right direction, his words are  
 "As a single spark can set on fire  
 a whole forest, in like manner can  
 a very small dose of medicine  
 overpower a great disease. And as  
 this spark has no weight, so with  
 the medicine given, however small  
 may be its weight should suffice  
 to effect its action?"

Here we have additional testimony  
 of the existence of Pre-Hahnemannian  
 Homoeopathy for certainly the system  
 of Paracelsus, if we are to judge  
 from his writings was a rude  
 system of homoeopathy; again it  
 shows that Paracelsus was in the  
 right path as far as he went, but  
 he wanted that energy and

perseverance which characterized the  
 great Hahnemann, and thus he lost  
 the prize which was almost within  
 his grasp. We have thus had recourse  
 to a number of the most scientific  
 and enlightened authorities of ancient  
 medicine to show that the homeo-  
 pathic law was not only recognized  
 but it was taught and practiced  
 and that too by some authors to  
 the exclusion of all other laws,  
 of cure, and this very fact seems  
 to have obtained for the principle  
 and its supporters, a notoriety al-  
 most equal to that which it ob-  
 tained in the days of Hahnemann.  
 The ancients were in the habit  
 of taking a warm bath imm-

immediately after having a preternatural heat excited from gymnastic or other violent exercise, for the purpose of preventing the bad results which generally follow the sudden check of perspiration; here again we have an application of the Law of similia, and in exact accordance with the teachings of some of the modern homoeopaths. We now pass on from the testimony of the ancients to examine the evidence of more modern authority, and here we find that the allopathic physicians for the last two hundred years have in some manner more or less distinctly acknowledged the truth of the homo-



iopathic law of cure. For example,  
 Von Storck admitted that stramonium <sup>would</sup> produce insanity when given  
 in excess, and on this principle  
 he administered it for the cure  
 of that disease. Boulduck, cured  
 diarrhoea with rhubarb and he  
 attributed the secret of his cure to  
 the purgative property of that drug.  
 The Danish physician Stahl said, "The  
 received method in medicine of treat-  
 ing diseases by opposite remedies, that  
 is to say by medicines which are oppos-  
 ed to the effects they produce, is com-  
 pletely false and absurd. I am  
 convinced on the contrary that dis-  
 eases are subdued by agents which  
 produce a similar affection; Burns

by the heat of the fire to which the parts are exposed; frost bites, by snow or very cold water; and inflammations and contusions, by spirituous applications. It is by these means that I have succeeded in curing a disposition to acidity of the stomach, by using very small doses of sulphuric acid in cases where a multitude of absorbing powders had been administered to no purpose.

Here we have the evidence of another very important witness to sustain our position, and we not only find that he taught and practiced in accordance with the principles of homoeopathy, but he denounced the old system of practice as false and absurd, and the very reverse of what it ought to be.

The treatment which he laid down for burns and inflammations has also been promulgated by some of the more modern champions in the allopathic ranks, for instance John Hunter pointed out the disastrous effects which followed the application of cold to burns and sustained the practice of exposing the parts to the fire. Sydenham also acknowledged the law of similia, and ~~he~~ was a man of great observation and one who stood at the head of the allopathic school in England, in speaking of burns ~~he~~ says, "Repeated applications of alcohol are preferable to all other remedies in burns?"



We have thus traced the therapeutic  
 law of similia step by step from the  
 foundation of medicine down to the  
 days of Hahnemann; and we find  
 that it was upheld and kept alive  
 through all ages, notwithstanding that  
 other theories had their rise and fall  
 by thousands. Like all other great  
 truths or discoveries it had its distinct  
 foreshadowings, and that too among  
 the generations who were not to derive  
 any great benefit from the future  
 discovery. And though the principle  
 was earnestly preserved, ~~and~~ written  
 on by every theorist in medicine,  
 yet it was reserved for our vener-  
 able master to place upon the sure  
 foundation of physiological

experimentations, the just therapeutic law of similia similibus; and it remains for us as followers of that truth to illustrate the law in its practical application to the cure of disease.

I now conclude my imperfect sketch of Pre-Hahnemannian Homoeopathy regretting that from my imperfect acquaintance with the classic languages of antiquity I have been able to render it but scanty justice. The subject is an interesting one and might well occupy a more powerful mind, and employ a more powerful pen than mine, and I hope the future Historian of Homoeopathy will do it better justice than I have done.